

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 230

By Brooks K

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate Charles Towler upon receiving the 2011 Governor's Arts Award for Folklife Heritage.

WHEREAS, this General Assembly is pleased to commend those exemplary citizens who, through an abiding commitment to excellence, have made significant contributions to the arts and brought national acclaim to the State of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, one such estimable individual is Charles Towler, a renowned figure in the world of Southern Gospel convention singing, who recently received the prestigious Governor's Arts Award in the category of Folklife Heritage for his work with an older form of music known as "shape note"; and

WHEREAS, the Governor's Arts Awards were established in 1971 by the Tennessee Arts Commission to recognize those individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to the cultural life of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Towler described shape-note style as a method of songwriting used to simplify music for beginners who wanted to learn how to sing in church, and many popular Christian songs, such as "I'll Fly Away" and "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms" were originally written in shape-note style; and

WHEREAS, his first song was published when he was twenty years old, and he has been involved in music ever since, celebrating fifty years of songwriting in 2010; and

WHEREAS, Charles Towler grew up in Athens, Georgia, and graduated from the University of Georgia with a Bachelor of Science degree in education; and

WHEREAS, he served with acumen and alacrity for six years as a teacher in public schools in Georgia and South Carolina; and

WHEREAS, in 1965, Mr. Towler was asked to become part of the staff of the Tennessee Music and Printing Company, a division of Pathway Press in Cleveland; and

WHEREAS, during the next thirty-two years, he served estimably in various positions with the company, including as Music Editor and Director of Music, compiling and editing sixty-four convention songbooks for both Tennessee Music and James D. Vaughn, Music Publisher; and

WHEREAS, more than 300 of Mr. Towler's gospel songs and two Christmas musicals have been published, and, in September 1997, he began his own company, Gospel Heritage Music, for which he does arranging, music typesetting, and publishing; and

WHEREAS, Charles Towler also teaches at local church music schools and is an instructor at several summer music schools, including the Stamps-Baxter School of Music; and

WHEREAS, since 1968, he has served as the Minister of Music at various churches, and he recently retired after fifteen years of outstanding service at Waterville Baptist Church in Cleveland; and

WHEREAS, a Cleveland icon and Tennessee treasure, Charles Towler has left an indelible impression on the artistic legacy of our great state, and he should be specially recognized; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and congratulate Charles Towler upon receiving the 2011 Governor's Arts Award for Folklife Heritage, commend his extraordinary contributions to the arts, and extend to him our best wishes for every continued success in all his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.